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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a definition of social skills in order to operationalize the components that need to be considered when teaching social skills to individuals with mental retardation in employment settings. It also presents current approaches to teaching social skills in employment settings. Social skills are defined as goal-oriented, rule-governed learned behaviors that are situation specific and vary according to social context; they also involve both observable and nonobservable cognitive and affective elements that assist in eliciting positive or neutral responses and avoiding negative responses from others. Five different approaches used to train social skills in employment settings are described, including: social skill training packages (generally consisting of a rationale for a given behavior, modeling, practice through role-play, and feedback); social scripts; training in natural work settings; self-control training; and process training. Process training addresses most of the components specified in the definition, but the need for more research on the role of this approach in training social skills is emphasized. (Approximately 50 references.) (JDD)

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Toward a Definition of Social Skills: Implications for Adults with Mental Retardation in Employment Settings

Janis Chadsey-Rusch

To secure and maintain employment, individuals with mental retardation must exhibit behaviors that are valued and considered appropriate in employment settings. Two major behavioral categories for ensuring employment success include production skills performed at some acceptable criterion and effective social skills. Without adequate skills in these areas, individuals with mental retardation are likely to encounter difficulties finding and maintaining a job. Although both production and social skills are necessary for job survival (Rusch, 1979), there is ample evidence to suggest that a major reason for job loss for persons with mental retardation may be their lack of appropriate social skills (Brickey, Campbell, & Browning, 1985; Ford, Dineen, & Hall, 1984; Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Hanley-Maxwell, Rusch, Chadsey-Rusch, & Renzaglia, 1986; Hill, Wehman, Hill & Goodall, 1986; Kochany & Keller, 1981; Martin, Rusch, Lagomarcino, & Chadsey-Rusch, 1986; Wehman et al., 1982).

In work settings, two general classes of social interactions occur—task-related and non-task-related interactions (Chadsey-Rusch, Gonzalez, Tines, & Johnson, in press; Kirmeyer, 1988; Lignugaris/Kraft, Salzberg, Rule, & Stowitschek, 1988). Task-related interactions are those interactions related to work or work tasks and include such behaviors as following directions, requesting assistance, sharing work information, and accepting criticism (Chadsey-Rusch et al., in press; Lignugaris/Kraft et al., 1988). Employers believe that task-related interactions are crucial to employment success and are more important than non-task-related interactions (Rusch, Schutz, & Agran, 1982; Salzberg, Agran, & Lignugaris/Kraft, 1986).

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Non-task-related interactions, or interactions unrelated to work or work tasks, include such behaviors as teasing or joking, sharing information about sports, or asking questions about a co-worker's family (Chadsey-Rusch & Gonzalez, 1988; Lignugaris/Kraft et al., 1988). Although these interactions may not be viewed as crucial by employers, it is possible that they may contribute toward the formation of friendships, social support, and satisfaction on the job (Chadsey-Rusch, 1990; House, 1981; Klein & D'Aunno, 1986; Pogrebin, 1987).

Although it is clear that effective social skills are related to job success, and possibly social support, little agreement has been reached on how to define, measure, assess, and teach social skills. Probably the primary reason for this lack of consensus stems from the difficulty of operationally defining social skills (Chadsey-Rusch, 1986). For example, the socially skilled individual has been described as someone who easily interacts with others, is a good conversationalist, can communicate and elicit information, and leaves others with a positive feeling after the interaction (Kelly, 1982). Alternatively, Ladd and Mize (1983) defined the socially skilled person as one with the "ability to organize cognitions and behaviors into an integrated cause of action directed toward culturally acceptable social or interpersonal goals" (p. 127). Although these descriptions seem intuitively accurate, they really are too broad to lend themselves easily to curricular and instructional components.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a definition of social skills that will begin to operationalize the components that need to be considered when teaching social skills to individuals in employment settings. Clearly, it is difficult to extract a cohesive definition that adequately captures such a complex part of life, yet it makes sense to try and know what something is before one attempts to teach it. In addition to the presentation of a definition, current approaches to teaching social skills in employment settings will be reviewed and analyzed with respect to the definition proposed in this paper.

A Definition of Social Skills

Social skills are very complex because they are composed of multiple components. In 1983, Cartledge and Milburn described several of the elements that seemed to be present in

most definitions of social skills; these elements can be combined to form a comprehensive definition. This definition, which consists of four parts and is presented in Table 1, is discussed in relationship to how it might be manifested in employment settings.

Table 1

Components of Social Skills Definition

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1. Social skills are rule-governed learned behaviors that elicit positive or neutral responses.
2. Social skills are instrumental, goal-directed behaviors.
3. Social skills are situation specific and vary according to social context.
4. Social skills involve both specific observable and nonobservable cognitive and affective elements.

Social Skills are Rule-governed Learned Behaviors that Elicit Positive or Neutral Responses

Successful social skills can be viewed as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable an individual to interact with others in ways that elicit positive or neutral responses and assist in avoiding negative responses from others. This part of the definition implies that there are acceptable and nonacceptable social skills, that social skills are learned, and that success in using these skills is judged by others.

There are social rules to our interactions which dictate acceptable and nonacceptable behavior. From a pragmatic perspective, knowledge and skillful use of these rules enable an individual to know "when to speak, when not, and what to talk about, with whom, when, where, in what manner" (Hymes, 1972, p. 277). For example, when workers have conversations with their co-workers, most know to listen and not to speak until there is a pause in the conversation—that is, they take turns talking. As another example, many

workers know that when they meet a new co-worker for the first time, they should not ask private questions, such as "How much do you weigh?" or "How much money do you make working here?" Even though they may be hard to define, there are rules to our social behavior, and most people would recognize and agree upon these rules (McFall, 1982). The rules that surround particular social interactions dictate acceptable and nonacceptable behavior and need to be taught to socially unskilled individuals.

Social skills are learned. The best evidence we have for knowing that these skills are learned is to compare the social skills used by individuals in different countries. For example, workers from Japan are likely to be more formal in their interactions with one another than workers in the United States (Schein, 1981). These social conventions or rules are likely shaped by parents and societies in general. If we know that social skills are learned, then it logically follows that social skills can be taught, which is good news for workers who display nonacceptable behaviors.

Social skills are judged by others, and it is probable that we are judged as being either socially competent or incompetent (McFall, 1982). If our social skills are judged as competent, we will likely receive positive responses, or at least avoid receiving negative responses from others. The unfortunate thing about having our social skills judged by others is that this judgment is subject to error and bias. Such factors as the personal characteristics of the judge and the person being judged (e.g., age, sex, experience) may influence the type of judgment made (McFall, 1982). Additionally, a worker may be judged as being socially competent during a work period, but be judged as incompetent during lunch. It may be important for individuals to recognize that judgments of their social performance may vary, depending upon the skill they are trying to display, the context they are in, and the person who is doing the judging.

Social Skills Are Instrumental, Goal-Directed Behaviors

Social skills are used for a reason—we exhibit social behaviors in order to affect others and the impact we have will influence future interactions. Social skills are used to achieve

certain goals or purposes. For example, questions may be used by employees at work in order to find out information that is related to completing a specific job task. A worker may tell a joke in order to draw positive attention to himself/herself. A work direction might be followed in order to avoid criticism. Social skills are used to meet goals, and these goals are determined by the individual. If engaging in a specific social skill results in a goal being met, then the same social skill will probably be used in future interactions. It is important for workers to understand that their social behaviors can affect environmental and personal change.

Social Skills Are Situation Specific and Vary According to Social Context

The types of social skills that are exhibited by individuals will vary, depending upon the physical setting, the people in the setting, and the social context or occasion for the interaction. Physical setting exerts direct influence on social skills. For example, consider the effect that a fitness center and a library have on social skills. At a fitness center, an employee may talk loudly when instructing a racquet-ball player, but if the same type of behaviors were exhibited by a library employee, patrons and other librarians would quickly give negative feedback. According to McFall (1982), setting accounts for a major portion of the variance found in judgments of social performance.

The social occasion associated with interactions can also influence the type of social skills demonstrated, and social occasions can be different from physical settings; that is, two social occasions can occur in the same physical setting but have a differential influence on the types of behaviors exhibited. For example, a funeral and a party can both be held in a work setting (e.g., church), but individuals at funerals appear sad and subdued, while individuals at parties are more likely to appear happy and gay. Various social occasions influence the types of social skills that are exhibited.

Skills also vary depending upon the individuals involved in the interaction. For example, the types of social skills used with co-workers may be very different from the skills used with the boss. Workers would probably feel comfortable asking a close friend private

questions, but would not feel comfortable asking a casual acquaintance the same type of questions. The skills used with others will likely vary depending on the age, sex, prior interactions, and relationship experienced with others. As with the other components, workers must be taught that social skills vary depending upon the physical setting, the people in the setting, and the social context or occasion for the setting.

Social Skills Involve Both Specific Observable and Nonobservable Cognitive and Affective Elements

The last component of this definition states that the specific behaviors used to exhibit social skills are both observable and nonobservable, that these behaviors are influenced by the form of communication and the affect used, and that the ability to make fine discriminations and solve problems influences the judgments of others and whether or not communication goals are met. In the literature on social skills training in employment settings (e.g., Breen, Haring, Pitts-Conway, & Gaylord-Ross, 1983; Kelly, Wildman, Urey, & Berler, 1980; Rusch & Menchetti, 1981; Rusch, McKee, Chadsey-Rusch, & Renzaglia, 1988), a number of behaviors have been taught which were observable and could be discreetly defined and reliably counted. Some of the behaviors trained included such skills as asking questions, following directions, requesting assistance, and greetings. The communicative form used in the majority of these studies has been verbal; study participants have been asked to exhibit these various social skills through verbal forms, or talking. Workers need to be able to exhibit a variety of valued task and non-task-related social behaviors; however, the observable form of the behavior may not always have to be verbal (Chadsey-Rusch, 1986).

There are also other behaviors or processes that are not observable, but thought to be used when engaging in social interactions. These are the behaviors used to perceive or decode social contexts, make decisions about the observable behavior to exhibit, and evaluate the effectiveness of the behavior used based on the feedback from others and whether or not the social goal was met. Inherent in this process is the ability to make fine

discriminations based on setting, social occasion, and the people involved in the social interaction. Although it is difficult to measure this problem-solving process, several researchers who have proposed social-skill models are convinced it is essential to social competency (Argyle & Kendon, 1967; Ladd & Mize, 1983; Greenspan, 1981; McFall, 1982; Trower, 1982). There is also data to suggest that the lack of this process has contributed to job loss among workers with mental retardation (Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1986; Martin et al., 1986). In addition, there is at least one study that suggests that components of this process can be trained and result in improved social skills (Park & Gaylord-Ross, 1989).

Summary

Social skills can be defined as goal-oriented, rule-governed learned behaviors that are situation specific and vary according to social context; they also involve both observable and nonobservable cognitive and affective elements that assist in eliciting positive or neutral responses and avoiding negative responses from others. This definition of social skills reveals how complex it can be to interact with others, particularly if one looks at the component parts. Yet many of us learn these behaviors easily without much direct instruction. This should not imply, however, that all people are good in all social contexts all of the time. Our abilities vary depending upon our past experiences and reinforcement history; the social occasion, setting, and people in the setting; and the strengths and weaknesses of the observable and nonobservable social behaviors we exhibit.

Even within this definition, there are components and behaviors discussed that are still broad and need to be more precisely defined in order to be useful for teaching. Consider the observable behavior of "having a conversation" or using discourse skills (Hymes, 1972). Discourse skills can be further defined by talking about the behaviors used to initiate, maintain, and terminate an interaction. Additionally, these behaviors can also be analyzed with respect to the grammatical, morphological, syntactical, and semantic skills needed to be effective with others. McFall (1982) has stated that although this "task analysis" of social

skills is a necessary prerequisite for teaching, it is unlikely that this analysis will have to be so fine as to include microbehaviors, such as a wink. However, further research is needed in order to determine the salient behaviors in interactions that elicit positive or neutral responses from others.

The remainder of this paper will review the literature on current approaches used to train social skills in employment settings. These approaches will be analyzed with respect to how closely they match the definition of social skills presented above and how effective they have been in producing generalizable and durable skills.

Social Skill Training Approaches

Chadsey-Rusch (1990) identified five different approaches that have been used to train social skills in employment settings. These five approaches are: (a) social skill training (SST) packages, (b) social scripts, (c) training in natural work settings, (d) self-control training, and (e) process training. Each of these approaches are discussed below.

Social-Skill Training Packages

Social-skill training packages typically consist of the following components: (a) a rationale for why a given social behavior was desirable, (b) an opportunity to observe examples of the behavior (i.e., modeling), (c) an opportunity to practice the behavior, usually in role-play situations, and (d) feedback regarding performance. The majority of the studies utilizing this approach have trained social skills in analogue settings, but several researchers have trained and taken measures in the natural work environment. For example, Kelly, Wildman, Urey, and Berler (1980) used a social skills training package to improve the job interview skills repertoire of four adolescents with mild retardation. Rather than applying the social skills training package to individual trainees, the package was applied to the group across behaviors in a multiple-baseline design. Immediately after a 45-minute training session, individual members of the group participated in a mock interview. Social validation techniques were used to construct the mock interviews (i.e., role plays) and to judge the training effects. Results of the study demonstrated that a group

social skills package was effective for increasing the frequency of job interview behaviors. In addition, these behaviors generalized to an in vivo job interview at a fast food restaurant and were judged by a panel of employers as being improved after training.

Social skill training (SST) packages have also been used to train a variety of other employment-related social skills, including: compliance to directions (Karlan & Rusch, 1982; Rusch & Menchetti, 1981), question-asking during conversations (Chadsey-Rusch, Karlan, Riva, & Rusch, 1984), and handling criticism, taking a joke, and soliciting assistance (Shafer, Brooke, & Wehman, 1985). Although all studies have been successful in training social skills, generalization and maintenance results have been tentative and of questionable durability and quality.

Social Scripts

Gaylord-Ross and Haring (1987) indicated that much of the dialogue or social conversation used between individuals is based on "predictable, repeating scripts" (p. 269). In a study conducted by Breen, Haring, Pitts-Conway, and Gaylord-Ross (1985), a break-time sequence, or script, of social behaviors was taught to four high school students with autism. Nonhandicapped high school students were used as trainers, and generalization effects to an in vivo break time with natural co-workers were measured.

During the simulated break time, the task-analyzed sequence of a social script was taught using instructional assistance along with massed practice for steps that were difficult to learn in the sequence. Once the sequence was learned, generalization to a natural co-worker was measured. When generalization did not occur, a second peer was used as a training co-worker until generalization effects were demonstrated. All four youths learned the social skill scripts and achieved generalization to natural co-workers. However, the experimenter was present during all generalization probes which could have served as a prompt for the trained behaviors to occur, and the training was conducted in the probe setting. Also, it was difficult to determine the specific effects from the social script because this approach was used in combination with multiple trainers.

Natural Work Settings

Nisbet and Hagner (1988) have recommended that supervisors and co-workers be actively involved in the habilitation of workers with severe handicaps. In particular, they discuss the "mentor option" where a co-worker might provide training and support to a worker with disabilities. Stowitschek, McConaughy, Peatross, Salzberg, and Lignugaris/ Kraft (1988) recently conducted a study that capitalized on this idea; however, the study was conducted in a work-activity center rather than in an integrated employment setting. The purpose of this study was to determine whether supervisors' statements of rules for appropriate social responding prior to the work day, paired with supervisors' reminders during the work day and preceding staged occasions for responding, were associated with the use of social amenities by adults with mental retardation. From the results of the study, it appears that some workers did increase the frequency with which they used social amenities with this training, and further increased their rate when they were asked to repeat the rules prior to the work day. It was not possible for Stowitschek et al. to measure generalization across settings and people because the study was conducted in the criterion work setting.

Self-Control Training

Self-control, or self-management, procedures are used to teach individuals to manage their own behavior so they are less dependent on the support or teaching from others. Essentially, there are three types of self-control procedures: (a) self-instruction, where individuals manipulate behavioral antecedents, (b) self-monitoring, where individuals monitor or record their own behavior, and (c) self-reinforcement, where individuals evaluate their own behavior and administer the appropriate consequences. These three procedures have been used in isolation, as well as combined into packages, to teach individuals with disabilities a variety of behaviors, such as academic performance (Albion & Salzberg, 1982) and speed of completing vocational tasks (Crouch, Rusch, & Karlan, 1984).

Recently, several studies have been conducted using self-control procedures to teach social skills in employment settings. Agran, Salzberg, & Stowitschek (1987) used a combination of self-instructions and the typical SST package to teach four adults with moderate mental retardation to initiate interactions with a supervisor when they ran out of work materials or when they needed assistance. Rusch, McKee, Chadsey-Rusch, & Renzaglia (1988) conducted a similar study. In the Rusch et al. study, self-instruction, self-reinforcement, a SST package, and corrective feedback in the generalization setting were used successfully to teach an adolescent with severe handicaps to request assistance when there were work materials missing or when there were not enough work materials to complete the work task. Additionally, Storey and Gaylord-Ross (1987) showed that self-monitoring increased the rate of positive statements made to others during a break-time pool game at a branch office of the AT&T company. However, when treatment effects were assessed in another break area, there was little generalization found.

With the studies reported above, it is difficult to ascertain the specific effects that self-control strategies have had on the acquisition and generalization of social skills. In all of the studies reported above, self-control strategies were used in combination with other intervention approaches. Even with the use of self-control components, however, generalization effects were only demonstrated in one study (Agran et al., 1987).

Process Training

Closely related to use of self-control strategies is the concept of process training. With process training, individuals are taught a generative process of social behavior rather than specific component behaviors (Hollin & Trower, 1988). Argyle and Kendon (1967) originally conceptualized a social skills model which consisted of a series of stages; this process model has also been discussed by McFall (1982). Figure 1 presents a social skills model which is a combination of the theoretical thinking suggested by Argyle and Kendon (1967), McFall (1982), and adapted from Hollin and Trower (1986).

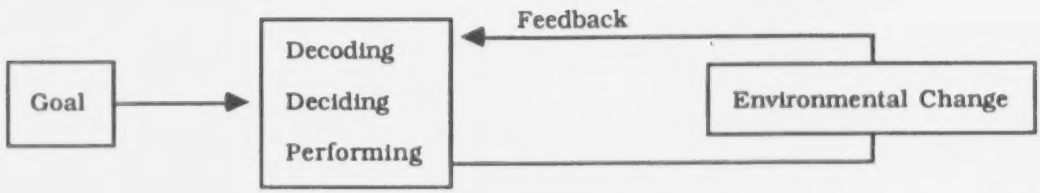

Figure 1. Process Model Adapted from Argyle & Kendon (1967), McFall (1982), and Hollin & Trower (1986).

The first stage in this model is the goal that the individual wants to achieve. Within an employment context, an individual may want to share work-related information, accept criticism, or make friends. Social goals can be viewed as social tasks. As McFall (1982) has stated, social skills need to be chunked into some kind of unit, and the key is to find the best unit with which to categorize and organize events. Within the process approach, it would be important to understand the social goals of workers. If direct service providers chose goals for workers and instituted training programs to achieve these goals, it might be possible that training programs would be unsuccessful because the workers might not have a vested interest in the goal of training.

The second stage of the model begins with the perception or decoding of cues from the environment. Within this model, an individual must be able to discriminate and interpret the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others, as well as the cues and rules associated with the social occasion and environment (McFall, 1982). After decoding, decision skills (McFall, 1982) are used to search for responses that would meet the requirements of the social task, and, from such a list of responses, decide upon the most appropriate response(s)—i.e., individuals must translate their perceptions into plans for action (Hollin & Trower, 1988). After making a decision, the individual then carries out or performs a specific behavior.

The third stage in the model consists of the external consequences of the performance which cause some sort of environmental change (Hollin & Trower, 1988). Here, the

individual judges whether or not the performed behavior appropriately met the demands of the social task or goal. Future response selection is then modified based upon the feedback encountered.

An example may help to clarify the process approach. Assume that a female worker is at risk for losing her job because she does not accept criticism from her supervisor. The worker does not want to lose her job and knows that she will be regarded as more of a valued employee if she learns to accept criticism from others. Thus, her goal (and the social task) is for her to learn to accept criticism from her supervisor.

With decoding skills, the worker is taught to interpret and discriminate cues in the environment when she is criticized. The worker might need to understand what is happening, who is criticizing her, why the person is criticizing her, and how the person might feel.

With decision skills, the worker generates several response alternatives (e.g., ignoring the person, crying, blaming it on others, apologizing, and promising to remedy the situation) and selects the response that has the highest probability of eliciting positive feedback from her environment.

With performance skills, the worker displays a response to the criticism (e.g., apologizes and says she will remedy the situation). Then, the worker evaluates the feedback from her environment in response to the behavior she displayed. She notes how the person feels, how she feels, and decides if she did the right thing. If her behavior resulted in positive feedback from her environment, then she would have met her social goal and would be more likely to emit the same behavior under future, but similar circumstances.

Unfortunately, very little research exists which has investigated the effectiveness of training job-related social skills using a process approach. Recently, Park and Gaylord-Ross (1989) conducted a series of two studies: one was done to determine the efficacy of a process training package for enhancing generalization and the other one was done to determine

whether traditional SST procedures could have produced equal or superior results to the process approach.

In the first study, two youths with mild mental retardation were trained to either increase or decrease a variety of social skills—greetings, making polite and negative comments, mumbling, initiations, and expansions. Contingent effects were seen in the training setting with the onset of process training and the effects generalized to the nontraining or work settings. In the second study, two additional youth with mild mental retardation were trained to exhibit initiations, expansions, and terminations in conversations. First, the youth were trained to exhibit these behaviors with a traditional SST package, and then they were trained to exhibit the behaviors using a process approach. No generalization effects appeared in the criterion work setting until process training was instituted. Thus, Park and Gaylord-Ross (1989) demonstrated that youth with mild mental retardation could learn the process for generating social behaviors, and that the process approach did lead to the generalization of behaviors across settings. Additionally, this study begins to suggest that the process approach may be more effective for training job-related social skills than the traditional SST package.

Analysis of Training Studies and Their Relationship to the Definition of Social Skills

In this paper, social skills were defined as goal-oriented, socially acceptable learned behaviors that are situation specific and vary according to social context; they also involve both observable and nonobservable cognitive and affective elements that assist in eliciting positive or neutral responses and avoiding negative responses from others. Each of the five approaches to training, which were discussed above, typically focused on training observable behaviors within the context of specific situations or scenarios presented to study participants. In this respect, all of these approaches meet at least two of the elements included within the definition of social skills—a focus on observable behaviors that were situation specific. However, except for the studies incorporating self-control strategies or the process approach, little attention has been paid to the goals of training (or what the

participant might want to achieve) or the nonobservable cognitive and affective elements that are associated with social skills. Specifically, within most of the training approaches, participants have not been trained to perceive and interpret social contexts, nor have they been trained to generate and decide upon effective responses that would best meet the demands of a social situation. Additionally, they have not been trained to evaluate their own social behavior because environmental consequences are generally provided by the trainer. In fact, it appears that it is only the process approach that begins to address most of the components specified in the definition.

But is the process approach the answer to training social skills? Clearly, there has been so little research regarding this approach that no answer can be given. Because the approach is more theoretical than applied at this time, there are many questions about how to operationalize and teach the process. For example, if the decoding process is taught, it is not clear which specific social cues individuals should be taught to discriminate; that is, what are the most salient social cues that set the occasion for social responses? Within the definition proposed above, we know that social skills vary depending upon the physical setting, the people in the setting, and the social context or occasion for the interaction. If individuals are taught to respond to cues related to each of these three variables, will they be more likely to decode social tasks more accurately? Also, what is the best way to teach the decision component of the process, especially if individuals generate few alternatives for responding, or only generate inappropriate responses? Additionally, how can we be certain that the cognitive aspects of the process approach are being used in the performance setting since it is difficult to measure "thinking"? Thus, it may be that before we can answer the question about the effectiveness of the process approach for facilitating social skills, we need to ask questions about the best method(s) to operationalize the process so it can be taught.

Another pressing issue with regard to the process approach is how best to use it (or whether it can be used) with individuals who have severe language impairments. Because the process approach is taught primarily through language in analogue settings, there may

be some question whether it can be used with individuals with severe disabilities. Many researchers who work with individuals with severe handicaps (Brown et al., 1983; Coon, Vogelsberg, & Williams, 1981; Marchetti, McCartney, Drain, Hooper, & Dix, 1983) recommend that skills be taught in the natural environment. The reasoning behind this philosophy is that generalization effects will be enhanced. However, it is frequently unnatural and inconvenient for direct service providers to intervene and provide instruction to workers when they are engaged in social interactions with supervisors, co-workers, or customers. Additionally, some important social skills (e.g., responding to criticism) occur infrequently, and the probability is small that a trainer will be in close proximity when an episode like this occurs. Even though others (e.g., Nisbet & Hagner, 1988; Rusch & Menchetti, 1981) have recommended that co-workers be trained to provide quick instructions and feedback, such training may not contain all the necessary components (e.g., establishing goals, cognitive elements) that appear important for the development of generative social skills. Also, if co-workers are used as trainers, it is not clear what kinds of effects this would have on the establishment of other types of relationships, for example, friendships.

It is possible that the steps in the process approach could be simplified, or externally generated mediators other than language (e.g., the use of picture cues) could be used to teach the process. Picture cues have been used successfully to teach workers with moderate and severe mental retardation a variety of task-related job skills (e.g., Wacker & Berg, 1983). Certainly, research is needed to determine if the process approach is a viable and efficient way to teach general social skills, particularly to workers with severe disabilities.

Summary

In this paper, social skills were defined as being (a) goal oriented, (b) rule-governed learned behaviors, (c) that are situation specific and vary according to social context; they also involve (d) both observable and nonobservable cognitive and affective elements that assist in eliciting positive or neutral responses and avoiding negative responses from

others. Each of the four components of the definition were further discussed and illustrated with examples from employment settings. Additionally, five approaches that have been used to train social skills in employment settings were described and analyzed with respect to the proposed definition.

If the definition of social skills presented in this paper is accepted, then it can be concluded that with the possible exception of the process approach, few training approaches incorporate all aspects of the definition into their procedures. It may be that the proposed definition lacks validity; however, elements of this definition have come from researchers teaching social skills to children (e.g., Cartledge & Milburn, 1986), as well as a variety of other clinical populations, including persons with schizophrenia, phobias, mental retardation, depression, and substance abuse (Hollin & Trower, 1988). The goal of social skills training in employment settings should be to train generative skills that enable employees to participate equally in the social network of the workplace (Chadsey-Rusch, 1990). It is possible that a combination of training approaches will be needed to help workers meet this goal. Regardless of the approach or approaches chosen, it may be helpful to attend to the definition of social skills proposed herein so that researchers and practitioners direct their efforts toward a common aim.

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